

King County Agriculture Commission
Minutes from October 14, 2004
Sammamish Valley Grange
Woodinville, WA

Commissioners Present: Roger Calhoon, Dick Gradwohl, Nancy Hutto, Grant Davidson, Ben Kodama, Bob Tidball, Judy Duff and Jason Roetcisoender

Commissioners Absent: George Irwin, Michael Blakely, Ewing Stringfellow and Gaylia Bullock

Staff: Judy Herring, Eric Nelson, Steve Evans, Laurie Clinton, King County (KC) Dept. of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) Agriculture Programs

Guest Agency Staff: Daryl Grigsby, Manager, KCDNRP Water and Land Resources Division

Guests: Will Knedlik and Maxine Keesling

Chair Judy Duff called the meeting to order at 4:00pm. Judy asked for any changes to the agenda. The Snoqualmie Watershed Forum letter approval was moved ahead of the DNRP Business plan discussion.

Motion 01-10-04 Nancy made the motion to accept the changed agenda. Dick seconded and motion passed unanimously.

Roll call – Those present identified themselves as shown above, those absent had notified staff to be excused.

Judy thanked those in attendance and stated how much she enjoyed the field trip through the Sammamish Agriculture Production District from which Commissioners had just returned that showcased farms and farm projects.

Commission Roundabout

Nancy Hutto said she was glad to have survived the Puyallup.

Grant Davidson said that both the Kirkland and Woodinville Farmers Markets close this week. He announced that the city of Lake Forest Park will have a market next year and he will be the manager.

Judy Duff told about the great first year event held at their farm for the Farm Share Project through her church and the families that worked very hard.

Roger Calhoon commented that the next three weekends will determine whether or not his farm makes a profit this year.

Bob Tidball was very enthusiastic about the “100 Acre Project” plans the Commission saw on the field trip. He would like to try and do something similar in the Kent area because of the benefits it would bring to the south county area. He added that Roger’s farm is great and he certainly deserves to make a profit.

Approval of Minutes October minutes were not completed. They will be approved at the next meeting.

Public Comment

Maxine Keesling read her letter to the Commission regarding the Watershed Recovery Inventory Area (WRIA) 8 as it affects the Sammamish Valley as well as the Cedar River. She surmises that the basic goals and objectives of all the WRIAs are similar – basically, fish over people. She urged the Commission to pay attention to Watershed plans because of their impacts to agriculture.

Commission Business

Commission staff report: Judy Herring handed out a copy of the October 6, 2004, Comments and Suggestions Regarding USDA Programs for Small-Acreage and Minor Crop Producers in King County, Washington she had compiled for the Listening Forum held by the Deputy Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) held earlier this month in Toppenish. George Jacquish had attended the meeting and turned this in for the KC Agriculture Program. George reported that the Secretary said he read all his emails and welcomed hearing from farmers about what they like or don’t like. Judy said she felt the main purpose for sending the statement was to let the USDA know that we do have agriculture in King County, which includes a lot of small farms – so please listen to their needs.

Eric reviewed the draft of commissioner comments compiled from meetings, emails and phone calls on the WRIA 7 plan. The Commission had been given a detailed presentation from the WRIA 7 Program Coordinator, Sandra Kilroy at the September meeting and she said a letter from the Commission commenting on the plan would be appreciated. The Commissioners made edits and discussed the draft. The additions were to:

- make a stronger statement in #4 that the Commission was not willing to give up and reduce any agriculture lands in the county, and to make sure the “Ten Year Plan” is modified to include that, if it doesn’t have it
- to clarify that the Agriculture and Drainage Assistance Program plan addresses keeping ag land quantity as it is currently and express the hope that success in fish recovery alters the Ten Year plan accordingly
- ensure there is a strong check and balance in the Ten Year plan so that agriculture lands can have restrictions scaled back when fish recovery improvements occur
- and to make point that salmon recovery is well documented now, without the large buffers so the efforts should be to protect those returning runs not to increase acres of ag land taken out of production
- add Farm Management Plans with best management practices implemented under #5

Motion 02-1014 Jason made the motion to incorporate the draft comments with the additions as stated above into a letter. Bob seconded and motion passed unanimously. Eric will work with Claire to prepare a letter for Judy’s signature.

DNRP Business Plan

Daryl Grigsby came to discuss the proposed WLRD Business Plan. There was a lengthy question and answer period. Daryl explained how it impacts ag areas of interest. He said the purpose of the plan is to get ahead of future financial difficulties the division will face in large part due to declining service areas as remaining Urban Growth Areas annex. Commissioners voiced their concerns that agriculture’s contribution has been significant in regards to water quality and habitat protection and that continued use of county dollars to support and protect farmland and agriculture programs is a sound financial investment of citizen tax dollars. Concern was raised that farmers have the perception that the County does not see any benefit to ag land other than as flood storage. Daryl explained future funding strategies and Commissioners offered their ideas for long term funding. The Commissioners expressed their alarm that County support for agriculture appears to be waning, after years of tremendous support that has established King County as a leader in protecting and promoting ag in an urbanized county. This championing of the cause has created an increase in active agriculture, increase in ag land productivity and ag programs. The apparent decreasing of support doesn’t make sense when the public is clamoring for more locally grown products as proven by the continuing increase in Farmer’s Markets, and the increase in programs supporting and promoting locally grown produce, meat and eggs. They agreed that if farmlands and farmers are lost in the county, they will never get them back.

A lot of questions were directed at the elimination of the Farm Specialist from the 2005 budget, and the implications of that for ag programs as described in the WLRD Business Plan. Daryl said he will return to speak with the Commission when the plan is finalized and available to the public.

Old Business

Judy led the discussion on what steps to take to oppose the elimination of the Farm Specialist. She listed the four public meetings where there will be an opportunity to speak and talked about appearances before the Council at the Courthouse. She said she would contact everyone via email. Everyone agreed they would participate.

New Business

It was decided there would not be a November meeting; December won't be an official meeting, but rather a retreat, spent at the Western WA. Ag Summit in Puyallup.

Meeting adjourned at 5:17 pm